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ABSTRACT

This companion document to an instructor's guide for a 30-hour course on effective communication begins with a list of course objectives, expected outcomes, and prerequisites. Lessons are organized into the following categories: introductory lessons; reading lessons; writing lessons; listening and speaking lessons; and newsletter production lessons. Materials for each lesson include the following: a section titled "before you begin" that helps the student get ready by answering questions or writing responses; exercises; answers for self-check; and a section titled "key points to remember" that is provided for the student to record what he or she thinks is most important to remember. Appendixes include a glossary and answer key. (YLB)

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ED 424 386

WORKPLACE EDUCATION

Effective Communication

Improving Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening skills in the Workplace

Participant's Guide

Nancy Ruetz

Project ALERT

Wayne State University
College of Education

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Effective Communication Participant Guide

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*What you can expect to learn in **Effective Communication***

The objectives for this course are:

- To identify strengths and weaknesses in regard to communication skills.
- To identify and understand the 4 stages of learning.
- To identify your audience and adapt your communication to them.
- To compare behavioral skills of good interpersonal communication with those that obstruct communication..
- To improve communication skills through opportunities for practice.
- To identify skills for more active listening.
- To recognize the difference between factual and emotional communication and respond appropriately.
- To observe basic body signals of behavior and understand what body language "says."
- To use strategies for reading and writing based on the purpose of the task.
- To improve writing skills through practice, including legibility, spelling, clarity, accuracy, and completeness.

Expected Outcomes

Participants of this class will improve their knowledge of communication and communication skills-- reading, writing, speaking, and listening-- through the discussion and practice of sound principles of learning and application to job-related and personal situations.

Prerequisites -- How much do I need to know before I take this class?

There are no prerequisites for this class except for a willingness to improve communication skills. If you have difficulty reading and writing, you will be given assignments that will enhance your skills. Many lessons will be discussied, so students will feel comfortable regardless of how well they read and write.

What this course won't do

This course is **not** meant to be a beginning reading and writing class. It is important that students who are very limited readers and writers are identified and encouraged to speak privately with the instructor for a separate time to focus on improving those skills.

Preparation and Exercises

1. The section titled ***Before you begin*** is to help you get ready for the lesson. It is important to answer the questions or write responses requested before doing the actual exercise. These pages have been designed for those who missed the class and did not hear the discussion. However, your instructor may ask you to fill out the pages for extra practice.

2. The ***Exercise*** is designed to give you more practice or help you catch up when you miss a class.

3. Answers are provide in the back of the book so you can check yourself.

4. The section ***Key points to remember*** is provided for you to record what you think is most important to remember.

Introductory Lessons

Identify our strengths and weaknesses in communication skills

Introduction to interpersonal communication--

Setting your goals

With very few exceptions, the quality of our lives depend on the level of the interpersonal communication skills that we possess as well as the level of communication skills of those in our lives.

At home and at work, communication is an important part of success.

The 4 main channels of communication are:

reading writing

speaking listening.

Information comes TO a person by listening and reading.

Information goes FROM a person by speaking and writing.

We communicate with our behavior and appearance.

It is important that we learn to use all our senses when we communicate so we can make judgments about the importance and the believability of the information that we receive.

Our eyes and ears take in much information automatically when we communicate. There are times when things don't look like they add up. A person might say everything is fine, but may look very upset and tense.

Improving interpersonal communication skills can be the key to opportunities in every area of life.

Take some time to think about how skilled you are or would like to be in the areas of:

Reading Writing Speaking Listening

Reasons to improve communication skills

To understand better/ to help someone else understand better

To get information/ to give information

To learn/ to teach

To improve confidence

To find out about needs of others

To ask better questions

To make accurate evaluations

To enhance relationships

To solve problems

To show you care

To make intelligent decisions

To prevent waste (of time, resources, etc.)

To make money (get a raise)

To avoid embarrassment

To be a better friend and/or mate

To give appropriate responses or answers

To increase attention span

To improve your vocabulary

To improve your personality

To use the gifts of sight, speech, and hearing

(Add your own) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Maslow's 4 stages of learning.

Before you begin: When can a person expect to be done learning? Is there an age? No, Never

Think about when you were hired into this company. What kinds of things did you have to learn? How to speak correct

When you started working here, did you realize everything that you would be expected to learn? Yes No

Do people always know what they have to learn? Yes No

Exercise: Read *Maslow's 4 stages of learning.*

Think of a time when you learned something and went through all 4 stages.

What did you learn?

When were you at stage 1?

What happened to make you realize you were in stage 2?

How long did it take for stage 3? What do you remember about that stage?

When did you realize that you were at stage 4?

Identify your audience and adapt your communication to them.

Before you begin: Describe a situation where the speaker did not suit his talk to the audience? How did it make you feel? _____

_____

_____

_____

Read "Four year olds at the Fire Station."

Exercise: 1. Why was the first field trip to the fire station a disappointment to the children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. How did the teacher's communication change from the first field trip to the second one? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. How did the fireman's communication change from the first visit to the second one? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What can speakers and writers do to make sure their talks and writings are suited their audience? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Four year olds at the Fire Station

There was a nursery school class of 4 year olds who went on a field trip to the fire station. The teacher had read the children books about the fire department. The children had discussed their experiences with the fire department as a group. They were very excited to actually visit the fire station because many had never seen fire trucks and firefighters.

When they arrived at the fire station, a very nice, older firefighter greeted them at the door. He said he didn't usually do this--talk to groups--but he would do his best. He walked the children through the fire station. He gave them a very technical description about the station and the equipment. He talked about nozzle pressures and told them in detail about how the gauges work to control water pressure. At first, the children fidgeted during his long talk. Soon their behavior became a problem. In only a few minutes the children were bored. The trip was a disappointment to them and a disaster for the teacher.

The next time the teacher organized a field trip to the fire station, she was careful to ask for a fire fighter who was familiar with small children. The teacher suggested the kinds of things the children were interested in seeing and doing while at the fire station.

That visit went much better. The children got to sit inside the fire truck, ring the bell, and sound the siren. The firefighter asked them if they knew why fire trucks had bells and sirens. He let them answer and then directed them to the actual reasons. They also got to try on a firefighter's hat, coat, and boots. He told them why firefighters had special clothing. They got to see where firefighters sleep and eat. He told them how fire fighters took turns cooking and cleaning up. The children and the teacher were very pleased with their visit.

Key Points To Remember

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Speaking / Listening Lessons

To understand and identify the behavioral skills of good interpersonal communication

Before you begin: Have you ever heard the old saying, "Actions speak louder than words?" Do you think it's true? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Why do lawyers coach their clients on how to look and behave before going to court? _____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Read *How Behavior Affects Communication*.

1. How does a person look when they are bored or not interested in the present situation because they have something else to do? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. As an employee how can you affect how people react to you by your appearance and behavior? _____

3. Think of situations where the way the voice sounded influenced what the listener thought. How does a person's voice affect their message?

4. Give some examples of when your voice can be too loud or too soft?

The 3 parts of a spoken message
There are three main parts of every spoken message.

1. The message itself--the words that are used (*Verbal*)
2. The voice-- how the voice sounds, how the voice modulates (intonation), if it goes up and down as compared to being monotone or dull, and how loud or soft it is, also called projection. (*Vocal*)
3. The look of the speaker-- how the speaker uses his face, expressions, and body movements while speaking. (*Visual*)

An effective speaker knows how to put all three together so the message is consistent. Often speakers give inconsistent messages because the 3 parts don't add up. Think of a person who tells you everything is "fine" when you can see eyes full of tears and hands that are shaking.

The way a person looks while speaking is usually the most important part of the message. In a recent poll, over 50% said that the visual part of the message gives the most information. The voice itself is the next most important part of the message. Almost 40% said the intonation and projection of the voice determined how the message was received. Less than 10% said the words were the most important part of the message.

Watch for these behaviors
There are many behaviors or body and facial movements that give clues to the listener.

1. *Eye communication*. It is best to look steadily and sincerely at your listeners.
2. *Posture and movement*. Standing tall or sitting straight and moving naturally and easily is recommended. Going back on one hip may send the subconscious message that says, "I don't want to be here." Also rocking side to side, or going back and forth on your heels and toes says you'd rather be doing something else.
3. *Gestures and facial expressions*. Try to be relaxed and natural when you speak. Avoid nervous gestures like pushing up your glasses or tapping your fingers or toes. Try to recognize what your nervous gestures are and consciously try to avoid them.
4. *Movements*. Make direct movements when you are speaking, movements that have a purpose. Never back away from your listeners. Move toward them, especially at the beginning and end of your communication.

Keep in mind that different cultures have different ideas about how much space should be between people. If you have ever felt uneasy because your personal space was invaded, you know what that distance is for you. Remember also, that some people do not want to be touched. Some speakers invade the personal space of others when they touch the arm or shoulder of their listener.

5. *Voice and vocal variety*. Use your voice as though it were an instrument. Messages are lost in dull, monotone voices.

6. *Non-words and repetitious words*. Avoid using non-words like "um" or "er." This is very distracting. Repeating words like "you know" "OK" or "and so" should be avoided.

Key points to remember _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is smiling important?

Smiling is important-- especially if it fits the situation. People have a strong tendency to smile or not to smile. When it comes to smiling, people in business can be sorted into 3 groups:

- those who have naturally open and smiling faces
- those who have neutral faces that can change quickly to a smile or a frown
- those who look serious and intense whether they are or not.

The smilers have a distinct advantage when communicating with others. Listeners are usually more open to their ideas. Smilers can also give bad news more readily.

Those who have neutral faces, can learn to use smile in appropriate situations. Those who have serious and intense faces have a disadvantage when communicating. They may not even realize how their face looks. You may know someone at work or in your neighborhood who has the reputation of being "mean" or "hard to talk to" but once you get to know them, you realize that their expression doesn't really project the person inside.

Is smiling important? Yes No Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

Which of the three kinds of faces do you have? _____

_____

_____

_____

Key Points To Remember

Before you begin

Think of a good experience when someone listened to you or you listened to someone else? What happened to make it a good listening experience?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Fill out *Listening Attitudes and Behaviors.*

Listening Attitudes and Behaviors

(Adapted from *The Business of Listening* by Diane Bone)

Attitudes determine behaviors. To discover your listening attitudes, complete this exercise. If a statement describes your listening attitude, circle "Yes," if not, circle "No." Be as honest as you can about yourself.

Yes No 1. I am interested in many subjects and do not knowingly tune out boring information.

Yes No 2. I listen carefully for a speaker's main ideas and supporting points.

Yes No 3. I take notes during important meetings to record key points.

Yes No 4. I am not easily distracted.

Yes No 5. I keep my emotions under control.

Yes No 6. I concentrate carefully and do not fake attention.

Yes No 7. I wait for the speaker to finish before finally evaluating the message

Yes No 8. I respond appropriately with a smile, a nod, or a word of acknowledgment, as the speaker is talking.

Yes No 9. I am aware of behaviors that may distract a speaker and keep them under control.

Yes No 10. I understand my point of view and biases on some topics and try to listen with an open mind.

Yes No 11. I don't interrupt the speaker.

Yes No 12. I know the value of eye contact and maintain it most of the time.

Yes No 13. I often restate or paraphrase what the speaker said to make sure I have the correct meaning.

Yes No 14. I listen for the speaker's emotional meaning as well as subject matter content.

Yes No 15. I ask questions for clarification.

Yes No 16. I do not finish other people's sentences unless asked to do so.

Yes No 17. When listening on the telephone, one hand is free to take notes.

Yes No 18. I attempt to set aside my ego and focus on the speaker rather than on myself.

Yes No 19. I am careful to judge the message rather than the speaker.

Yes No 20. I am a patient listener most of the time.

Exercise:

1. For 5 minutes, sit quietly, at home, at work, or in a shopping mall and write down every sound you hear. Listen carefully and try not to ignore or tune out any sound. List every sound you hear.

2. What sounds are easiest to remember?

3. Did your mind wander while you were listening? Yes No

Read *Listening* and *How well do you listen?* Then rate yourself with the *Listening attitudes and behaviors Scale.*

4. Of the 4 types of listeners, which type are you? _____

Key points to remember: _____

Do you listen as well as you hear?

A 6 year old boy was taken to have his hearing tested. An audiologist is a person who has special training and equipment to measure hearing. The audiologist put him in a special room with a window. She asked him to signal her when he heard sounds. The audiologist used a machine that produced a wide variety of ranges and volumes of sounds. The little boy heard every one. He really enjoyed this test. It was like a game.

After the test, the audiologist talked with his mother. The audiologist said, "He can *hear* a fly walking on the ceiling, but I don't know how well he *listens*." What she meant was his ears were working fine. There was no reason to think he had any hearing problem. But listening is a voluntary act. In most cases, we decide whether or not we will listen.

Most of us are born with the ability to hear. We need to learn how to listen. Noise surrounds us all the time. We screen out many noises because we don't give them any importance. A word or tone of voice can signal us to listen-- something important may be happening. We choose what to listen to and this is often based on our past choices.

We choose to listen because:

1. The message is important
2. We are interested
3. We feel like listening
4. We have listened to this kind of information in the past.

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Listening Styles

Your listening style reflects your attitude and behavior and how you will respond. It can be a bridge or a barrier to good communication.

There are four main listening styles:

- Daydreamers
- Critical listeners
- Compliant listeners
- Active listeners

Daydreamers are most difficult to communicate with. There is a far-away look in their eyes. They are physically present, but not "really there." They are easily distracted and change the subject without warning.

Critical listeners are people who listen to find fault. They are so critical of each detail that they often miss the "big picture." Critical listeners may roll their eyes or frown as they listen. They may ask questions for clarification that are demanding and may make others feel cornered. Usually they have limited eye contact and no time for small talk.

Compliant or passive listeners are very quiet and don't give the speaker an opportunity to understand the real feelings or opinions of the listener. They are often shy and want to keep communications pleasant. They sometimes fake attention because they are silently thinking their private thoughts. They usually nod in agreement but add little to the discussion. They often say "That's nice," or "I see your point."

An *active listener* is involved with the speaker. A person who only hears is a passive receiver, like a tape recorder, who accepts and stores information.

Active listeners observe information with all their senses. They note the speaker's posture, body movements, facial expressions and other non-verbal clues. This is particularly important when what you see doesn't fit with what you hear.

Active listeners interpret. Some people talk in circles, leave out important information, can't find the right words, and still expect to be understood.

Active listeners are good at filling in the gaps and weaving meanings from the threads of information given. To let someone know you are really listening, learn to paraphrase what they've said. Three keys for interpreting the message are:

- Self knowledge--what you know about the topic
- Desire to understand
- Asking for clarification

Active listeners encourage speakers to tell them more if they need more information. It is a good idea to ask, "Can you tell me more about that?" rather than to ask specific questions and lead the conversation.

Active listeners check out what they hear as they listen to construct meaning. "Does this make sense?" "Is this accurate?" "Am I jumping to conclusions?" "Is the speaker jumping to conclusions?" But when checking out the information, it is better to ask more open questions like "what" and "how" than the accusing "why." A good listener doesn't make his questions feel like a cross examination. Examples of questions that clarify are:

"Is this what you mean when you say . . .?"
"This is how I interpret what you are saying . . . Am I correct?"
"I'm not sure I understand your meaning, could you give me an example?"

The purpose of the check is for completeness, accuracy, and understanding. It tells someone that you've' been listening carefully and you have made some interpretations and want to make sure they are on target. The listener checks out when s/he is uncertain about something or is not sure s/he has the idea.

Sometimes, even when we want to listen, anger, frustration, grief or hostility can act as *emotional cotton* in our ears. We tend to hear what we expect or want to hear and filter out that which doesn't fit with our feelings and attitudes. The three keys to receiving the message are to:

- Pay attention
- Select what is important
- Recognize emotional messages

When you listen to someone, you unconsciously begin to compare how you would feel in a similar situation or what you would do if you found yourself in

those shoes. Sometimes you may drift away from what a person is saying and focus on your reaction to it. This is NOT active listening because your focus is not on the person speaking. You only appear to be listening at these times, but you are really waiting for your turn to talk.

Key points to remember

How well do you listen?

Most people believe they are good listeners. We seem to believe because we are hearing, we are listening. Much of the time we THINK we are listening, bad habits, like interrupting, allowing ourselves to be distracted, jumping to conclusions, daydreaming, or giving in to boredom, stop us from becoming the kind of listeners we think we are.

The only way to make progress is to consciously change. Change begins with honest self-evaluation of our strengths *and* weaknesses. First, identify your listening weaknesses and decide which changes you want to make. Second, plan positive steps for action. Third. practice specific listening skills at every opportunity.

You can make dramatic improvements in your ability to listen effectively. Be aware that listening it is hard work. It requires patience, persistence, and a plan for listening skills to improve.

Experts estimate that 80% of each business day is spent communicating. At least half of that is spent listening. Communication skills in an average business day are broken down this way:

Listening	45%
Speaking	30%
Reading	16%
Writing	9%

Most people listen at an efficiency rate of about 50% during the first part of an oral communication. The efficiency rate drops quickly, and most people average an listening efficiency of about 25%

The best listeners we know are often our role models or professional counselors. The worst listeners we know are often related to us, probably because we save our worst behaviors for the people closest to us. It is not unusual to discover that our best friends think we are good listeners and our families think we are poor listeners. Bosses usually rank their employees' listening skills higher than they would rate themselves because we tend to listen to them better than others. We are more attentive when there is a direct payoff or penalty

Listening attitudes and behaviors scale

The following scale will help you interpret your present listening behaviors.

1-5 *No* answers	You are an excellent listener. Keep it up!
6-10 *No* answers	You are a good listener, but there is room for improvement.
11-15 *No* answers	Through practice you can become a much more effective listener in your work and personal relationships.
16-20 *No* answers	You may be missing more than you can imagine. Roll up your sleeves and get to work!

What did you learn about your listening attitudes and behaviors?

To recognize the difference between factual and emotional communication and respond accordingly.

Before you begin:
Have you ever been in a situation where some topic, words, or attitude "hit a nerve?" Yes No

What happened to your listening ability? _____

_____

Have you ever had a rough day at work, and found yourself growling at your family or friends when you got home? Yes No

"Out loud" exercise:
Simple commands might sound depending on different situations.

Using the words "come here," how would you sound when you coaxed a frightened puppy or kitten out of a corner?

How would you sound when you called to your 8 year old who had been caught playing with matches?

How would a boss sound who had just been chewed out by his boss and now needed to talk to an employee about a problem?

Exercise: 1. Think of a situation you have experienced when emotions affected communication. How can tense situations can be diffused or handled so they do not get worse? _____

_____

_____

2. List a number of ways to react.

_____

_____

_____

Before you begin:
Have you (or anyone you know) ever been interviewed? Yes No

Think of an interview you have seen on TV that was really interesting? Who was being interviewed? _____

What made it interesting? _____
_____
_____

Exercise
Choose someone you think is interesting (and willing) to interview.
Ask that person at least 10 questions. Make sure the questions are in good taste and suitable. Be sure you do not embarrass, humiliate, or offend the person you choose to interview.

Suggestions:
Interview someone who was alive when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Ask questions about that experience and how life was different then.

Interview someone who is talented in some area; sports, music, cooking. Ask questions about how they got started.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Reading Lessons and Materials

To learn and use strategies for reading improvement based on the purpose of the material being read.

Before you begin:
How you might drive if you were visiting a wildlife refuge and wanted to approach a herd of deer? _____

_____

_____

How would you drive if you were taking a person to the emergency room who was badly injured? _____

_____

_____

Would you read the comics the same way you would read a legal document?
Yes No

Exercise:
Think of different things you read; income tax information, notes or memos from fellow workers, assembly directions for a piece of furniture or equipment, directions from a cake mix, a sports article, the financial section a newspaper, a telephone directory, a love letter, etc. Tell how each might be read. How would they differ?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Reading: Locating Relevant Information

Before you begin:

When are small pieces of information needed at home?

When is it necessary to locate specific information at work?

Exercise:

How are the following different printed materials organized?

1. Newspaper

2. T V Guide

3. Parts Catalog

4. Telephone Book

5. What is the purpose of an index? _____

6. What is the purpose of a table of contents? _____

7. What kind of information is likely to be organized in alphabetical order?

Reading: Recognize, understand, and use technical vocabulary

Before you begin: Do you remember going to buy a house or a car for the first time and hearing words that you did not understand? There are times when it is necessary and important to understand the words that are specific to the subject. Choose a topic (like taxes, funerals, a sport, or computers) and list some words that are important to understand when dealing with that topic. Name of topic: _____

Vocabulary words: _____ _____

_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

Do any of the words have different meanings in different situations? Yes NO

If yes, put a star by the words that have different meanings.

Exercise:

When you were brand new to the job, try to recall and the words that you had to learn that were specific to the company or the job.

Word	Definition (Meaning)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Reading: Skimming and Scanning

Before you begin: How would you expect people to walk if they were on a tour of a wildlife refuge looking for animals or birds? _____

_____

_____

How do you think someone would walk if the bus was coming and there was still a block to the bus stop? _____

_____

_____

How does one cook for a special holiday celebration compared to a busy night after a long day at work? _____

_____

_____

The way we do things may change depending on the situation. This includes reading.

Exercise: How do you read the Sunday paper? _____

_____

_____

How would you read directions on a recipe to find out how many eggs are needed?_____

_____

_____

Skimming is a reading technique that helps you to go over large amounts of information in a short time. You may not have the time or the need to read the information carefully and thoroughly, but skimming will give you a general idea of what the reading material covers.

Scanning is a reading technique for finding specific bits of information in reading materials. You may need to find the time a certain movie begins at a particular show. There is no reason for you to begin at the top of the movie guide and read everything until you get to the theater you have selected. Scanning helps you locate information quickly.

Think of situations at work where skimming would be a useful reading strategy. _____

_____

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Think of situations at work where scanning would be a useful reading strategy. _____

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Writing Lessons and Materials

To learn strategies for writing improvement based on the purpose of the material being written

Before you begin: What is the difference between the way a grocery list and an application for a bank loan are written? Think about who reads it, if you are trying to make an impression, and if neatness, legibility and accuracy are necessary.

Exercise: How would your writing be different in each of these situations. Describe how you would do the following:

Write a letter to the manager of the company:

Fill out an insurance form:

Write directions to a location for a friend or co-worker:

Key Points to Remember

Writing: Fit the task to the purpose

Good writers must write accurately, completely, and clearly. It takes more than good spelling and punctuation.

In business writing, follow these steps:

1. Define your purpose for writing. What should you have when you finish?

2. Make a plan
   - Who must get the information?
   - What form should it be in?
   - What style?
   - What tone?
   - What information should be included?
   - How should it be organized?

3. Write.

4. Check your finished piece. Did it accomplish your purpose?

To improve legibility

Before you begin: Think of a time when you had trouble reading something important because of the handwriting. What happened? _____

_____

_____

_____

How can productivity at work be affected by unreadable handwriting?

_____

_____

_____

Exercise:

Show this page, with your answers for the two questions completed, to 5 people. Ask them to rate your handwriting. Is it:

1. Very easy to read — Person 1 rating: _____
2. OK to read — Person 2 rating: _____
3. Hard to read — Person 3 rating: _____
4. Very hard to read — Person 4 rating: _____
5. Unreadable — Person 5 rating: _____

Do you agree with their ratings? Yes NO

How would you rate your own handwriting? _____

Keep in mind that printing is as acceptable as cursive writing. There may be no need to pay attention to upper and lower case letters when filling out forms. The most important strategy is to consider **who** will be reading this writing, and will **they** have a problem with it. Sometimes all that is necessary to improve legibility is taking a few seconds to form letters and numbers properly.

Before you begin:

Think about a time when you received a note that was hard to understand. Why was it? _____

_____

What are some characteristics of a good note?

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Write a note to a coworker or supervisor about a problem.

_____

_____

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Before you begin:
When do you have to fill out forms? _____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have difficulty filling out forms? Yes No

If yes, what is the difficulty?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What MIGHT happens IF forms are not legible, accurate, and complete?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Fill out an insurance form or other job-related form. Try to make it as legible, accurate and complete as possible.

To improve accuracy in writing

Before you begin: Recall an experience that you had because written information you received was not accurate. What happened as a result of the inaccurate information? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Even small mistakes can cause problems. Think of someone who is trying to make a phone call only to find the number has been written down wrong; or showing up for a meeting or event on the wrong day or time because it was written down inaccurately

Exercise: List suggestions to improve accuracy when writing. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Taking time to double check written entries may be the most important strategy to improve accuracy.

To improve clarity in writing

Before you begin: For a moment, pretend you have a note in your hand. The writing is legible, the information seems to be accurate, but it isn't clear. You really don't understand the message.

In most note-writing situations, you are not available to answer questions if the message is not clear. Think about ways to make sure what you write is clear.

Exercise: Read *Plepto cheese*.

Plepto Cheese

My uncle did much of the grocery shopping for my aunt. Like most families, when two people work, the household chores were shared. One day he took the list she made for him to the store and began to go through it item by item. He found everything except the "plepto" cheese. He had looked through the cheese section twice, when he asked a store clerk if they carried "plepto" cheese. The clerk had never heard of it.

When he got home, they unpacked the groceries. He told her he had everything except the "plepto" cheese. She had no idea what he was talking about. She had never even heard of "plepto" cheese. He pulled out the grocery list she had written and pointed out that item on the list. She looked at it and laughed.

"That's not "plepto" cheese," she told him, "That's my abbreviation for Philadelphia cream cheese!" She had never been a great speller, and so she invented a quick way to shorten the long name. But she had never told him about her little time saver.

It's been many years since this happened, but our family still refers to Philadelphia cream cheese as "plepto."

Was the grocery list clear? Yes No

Why? _____

Most notes should answer the questions *Who, What, When, Where, How*.

Who-- Who is the note to? Who is the note from?

What-- What happened? What is the topic of the note?

When-- When did it happen? When do you need to a reply? Is a time important?

Where -- Where did it happen? Where will it take place?

How-- What needs to happen?

Write a note about something that happened at work to your co-worker or supervisor. Try to write clearly.

To improve completeness in writing

Before you begin: Remember a time when you started reading something only to find out it was not complete. Some of the most maddening examples of this are incomplete written directions to a location, directions for making something, or recipes. In each situation the missing pieces of information are frustrating.

Exercise: 1. What if you walked into work and found a note in your area, in handwriting that you didn't recognize, that said, "See you at 2." What would you think? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What is missing from the note?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What forms do you use at work?_____

_____

_____

4. What parts are important to complete? _____

_____

_____

_____

Are there some parts that you leave blank on purpose? Yes No

The importance of spelling and spelling improvement on the job

Before you begin: Have you ever worried about writing something because you were unsure about your spelling? Yes No

In what situations could it be important to spell words correctly?

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Read *Spelling*

Do you have a problem finding a word in the dictionary when you don't know how to spell the word? Yes NO

Keep track of the words that give you trouble on the *Troublesome Words* page.

Key points to remember: _____

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Spelling

There is some truth to the saying that good spellers are born, not made. Some people have the ability to spell words correctly with little effort. Others struggle with spelling their entire lives. Spelling is a function of visual memory. People who remember in pictures seem to find spelling easier. Quite often good spellers will say, "That word doesn't look right." They will rewrite the word until the "picture of the word" in their mind matches the "picture of the word" on the paper.

Keep in that *everyone has trouble with spelling* at times. No one knows how to spell everything!! Our language and vocabulary are constantly changing and it is difficult to keep up.

However, there are many ways to improve your spelling if you have problems spelling words correctly.

1. Keep a list of words that you know you have difficulty spelling
2. The more you read and write, the more experience you will have with troublesome words.
3. Guess at spelling words, then go to references like *The Bad Speller's Dictionary*, or a regular dictionary to verify spelling.
4. Ask coworkers for help spelling. If you only as for a particular word once, (because you add it to your list of difficult words) chances are good that person won't mind.
5. Since each of us learns differently, use all you senses to improve spelling.
    - Say it out loud and practice spelling it.
    - Write it several times on a piece of paper.
    - Draw it with your finger on the table so you can feel the movement of writing.
    - Close your eyes and try to picture the word.
6. Use a computer which has a word processing program with a spell checker.

There is no single "best" strategy. Different strategies work for different learning styles.

Troublesome Words

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z

Grammar, punctuation and word usage

Before you begin: Do you think you have problems with grammar, punctuation, and word usage when you write at home or at work? Yes No

What kind of problems?_____

_____

_____

_____

Why do we have grammar, punctuation and word usage rules? _____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Do you think you need practice and understanding on any of the following areas:

- Using complete sentences
- Subject - verb agreement
- Using pronouns clearly
- Using commas after sentence introductions
- Using commas with dates and addresses
- Making good word choices
- Using words that are positive and sensitive
- Possessives
- Words that sound alike but spelled different
  - *it's /its*
  - *your / you're*
  - *they're /there/ their*
  - *to/ too/ two*
- Using capital letters
- Others _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Speak to your instructor about ways to correct these problems.

Before you begin: How do you feel about writing?_____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Describe your good or bad experiences with writing at school or at work. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

When do you need to write for yourself? (Home shopping lists, notes, work records, etc.) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

When the instructor says, "I'd like you to write . . ." What comes to your mind? Write a reaction. It can be one word, a phrase, a few sentences or a page.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Newsletter Lessons and Materials

Newsletter - 1 Overview of an Employee Newsletter

Before you begin: What's the difference between a newspaper and a newsletter? _____

_____

_____

Do you get any newsletter? Yes No If yes, list the ones you receive.

_____

_____

_____

Exercise: Some common features of a news letter are calendar of events, recipes, profiles of individuals, editorial/opinion articles, feature articles, want ads, cartoons, art, humor, fiction, etc.

What features do you find **most** interesting? _____

_____

_____

What features do you find **least** interesting? _____

_____

_____

Think of as many reasons or purposes that you can to have an employee newsletter. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Read *Newsletter suggestions*

Newsletter Suggestions

1. Think of possible titles for the newsletter. It could be the subject of an article in the first issue.

2. Decide who should get the newsletter. All employees, classes only, certain departments, etc.

3. Discuss how often you will try to publish the newsletter.

4. Find meaningful tasks for people with different skills. Not everyone needs to write an article. Some people may choose to find pictures, cartoons, collect want ads, etc.

5. Choose a standard format that will be followed in each publication. For example:

- Interviews
- Profiles of employees
- Hobbies or sports
- Opinions/Editorial
- Features about events at the work site.
  - Advice column (Dear "Abby")
  - Cartoons
  - Humor--Jokes
  - Short stories
    - My most unforgettable character
    - My most embarrassing moment
    - Crazy things that happen on the job
  - Art work
  - Recipes
  - Want ads
  - Announcements
    - Marriages
    - Births / Deaths
    - Illnesses
    - Events
    - Promotions
    - Retirements

Newsletter 2: Rewriting and limiting

Before you begin: Have you ever written anything that was published?

Yes No

Have you ever written something that you changed many times so it said exactly what you wanted it to say? Yes No

Articles for a newsletter are written in a process that takes several steps. Seldom, if ever, does a writer sit down and produce a finished article in one try. This lesson is designed to help you understand what goes on before writing begins.

Exercise: List several topics about which you might be interested in writing. Possibilities are fishing, motorcycles, food, restaurants, cars, sports, etc.

_____

_____

_____

_____

A semantic map or word web is a way of organizing information about a topic. Write the topic in the middle of a clean sheet of paper and put a circle around it. Then list as many characteristics or parts of that topic as you can. Sometimes you will think of things that are related to the sub-topics. Here is an example of one.

Make a semantic map on the topic of your choice. List everything you can think of that relates to the topic.

Look at your semantic map to determine which aspect might be suitable for a newsletter article. Some topics are too broad to fit into a newsletter format. It is necessary to limit a topic for many reasons. Some of them are space considerations, too involved, and too broad to be informative.

Newsletter 3: Drafting articles

Before you begin: This lesson is linked to the lesson before. You should have completed a semantic map of a topic in order to do this lesson.

What is a *rough draft*? _____

_____

_____

If you don't know, look in the glossary at the end of this guide and copy the definition in the space above.

A rough draft is to a writer what a sketch is to an artist. Artists make sketches before they paint pictures; designers make clay models of cars before they are manufactured. The purpose of the rough draft is to get thoughts and main ideas down without regard to spelling and punctuation. This is what professional writers do. They write the rough draft and then come back to it after it rests a while to see if it says what they really want it to say.

Exercise: Write a rough draft for the topic based on the semantic maps you constructed during the previous prewriting activity.
Just get your thoughts down and don't worry about anything else.
Keep writing. to write." Write down anything that comes to your mind. If you can't think of anything, write, "I can't think of anything to write."

Write on every other line on the front (only) of lined paper. This will help during the revising step.

Newsletter-4: Revising articles for clarity

Before you begin: This lesson is linked to the lesson before. You should have completed a rough draft of a topic in order to do this lesson.

Exercise: Before you start revising your article, you should answer the following questions:

Who will read your newsletter article? _____

_____

_____

What is the age group? _____

What kind of readers do you think they are? _____

What kind of background knowledge or information do they have on this topic? _____

_____

(Remember these are your best guesses, you may not know a lot about your audience.)

What makes you stop reading an article? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The words you choose, your use of jargon or abbreviations, and the length of sentences will affect how the reader reacts to your writing.

Consider how the article might change depending on the intended audience. Consider whether it says what you wanted it to say; if it is interesting; if there is something that could be changed to make it clearer.

You might find it helpful to read your draft aloud to someone for suggestions.

Revise your rough draft for clarity, keeping your audience in mind.

Newsletter 5: Editing articles

Before you begin: This lesson is linked to the lesson before. You should have completed a revised draft of a topic in order to do this lesson.

Editing focuses on spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, capitalization, and all mechanical considerations of writing.

In newspaper productions, copy editors are responsible for the correctness of the final articles before publication. They check spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, capitalization, and other aspects of how the writing looks on the page.

To check for spelling errors, look at the words starting from the **end** and working toward the beginning. Sentences should be read one by one to see if they are complete and if subject and verb agree. A complete sentence has expresses a whole thought.

Exercise: Check your revised draft for errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization. Remember each sentence begins with a capital letter. There is either a period, question mark, or exclamation point at the end of each sentence. Your instructor will help point out mechanical errors if you are having difficulty doing this.

Before you begin: Have you ever felt strongly enough about an issue that you wanted to write a letter to an editor in a newspaper or magazine?

Yes No

List the kinds of issues about which people tend to have strong opinions.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Exercise:

To steer clear of really "hot" topics," here are some questions that you can answer either way.

Are professional athletes paid too much?

Should there be casino gambling in Detroit?

Should the State Fair stay at the present location or move to a new one?

Chose one question and make a semantic map that shows possible reasons that support one side of a question. Then do another semantic map taking the opposite side.

There are no right and wrong answers to these questions. This exercise is to demonstrate that you can develop either side of an issue. Some readers will agree with you and others will not.

List of references

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Reading for Workplace Success, Rosemarie Park, Rebecca Olsen, Neild Oldham. Paradigm Pub. 1991.

Straight Talk, Sherod Miller, Daniel Wackman, Elam Nunnally, and Carol Saline. Signet Books, 1981.

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Glossary

accurate- without mistakes or errors

acronym- a word formed from the first letter of each of the words in a phrase.

Ex. AIDS = Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

adapt- to adjust to a particular use or situation

appearance - how something or someone looks

appropriate- suitable or fitting

audience- the person or persons who listen to you speak or read what you write

audiologist - a person who evaluates hearing problems and advises treatment for them

behavioral skills- the way a person uses actions and reactions in regard to communicating with others

body language - gestures, facial expressions, posture, and movements that communicate to others without words.

brainstorm - a problem solving technique where all member of a group contribute ideas spontaneously (off the top of their head)

characteristics - serving to identify or set apart

clarity - the quality of being clear, easy to understand

communication - the exchange of ideas, messages or information by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and signals

competence - able to do a task properly

compliant - a tendency to give in to the will of others, to go along with

confidence - feeling sure or certain of yourself, feeling OK

conscious - aware of what is happening

credible- trustworthy or believable

draft - to write a preliminary plan or version

editing - to prepare for publishing by adapting or correcting

editorial - an article expressing an opinion

energetic - full of energy

enhance - to make better or clearer

etc. - *et cetera*, and so on

evaluate - to determine the value, to rate or appraise

format - the plan or organization of a piece of writing, example: a memo, a report, an editorial, a business letter

grammar - the accepted structure and rules related to standard language

impression- a feeling or image one gets as a result of an experience

incompetence - not able to do a task properly

interpersonal- relating to relationships between people

introduction - to provide first knowledge or first experience with something

jargon - the specialized words or language of a particular group or topic

Ex. Truck drivers, computers, real estate

journal - a personal record of experience and observations kept on a regular basis, possibly daily or weekly

legible - handwriting that is easily read

negative - not positive, not constructive

objective- a goal

oral - spoken out loud

overview- a broad look at a topic without a lot of detail

pertinent - to be related to a topic, pertains to, is relevant

policy- a plan that determines decisions or actions

positive - a good thing

predisposition - tend to favor something in advance

procedure - a set of methods or actions for doing something

profile - an article about someone telling their most remarkable characteristics and accomplishments

punctuation - a standard set of marks used in writing; periods, commas, colons, semicolons, etc.

refuted - proved to be false or mistaken

relevant - related to the matter at hand, pertinent

rough draft - the first try at a piece of writing

scan - to look over a piece of writing to find a particular piece of information Ex. finding the time a certain movie starts at a particular show.

semantic map - a picture or diagram of important ideas and details that helps you remember or organize

skim - to glance over a reading selection to get a general understanding of its content, sometimes reading just subtitles or the first sentence of each paragraph.

strategy- a plan of action

supplementary - something added for extra information

T-Chart - a chart shaped like the letter "T" that is labeled "looks like" on the left side and "sounds like" on the right side. It is helpful to use when trying to understand what one might see and hear when watching a person doing a certain behavior.

theory - an educated guess based on some knowledge or information that one tries to prove to be true.

unconscious - not aware

vocabulary - the list of words that is common to a topic. Topics like real estate, truck driving, or computers each have their own lists of words.

Answer Key

No answers are given for ***Before you begin*** questions. They are there to get you thinking about the topic and usually have to do with your opinion or your experience. They are an important part of the lesson so please don't skip them.

You will find that many pages in the answer key do not give a list of "right" answers. That is because the learning of the lesson depends on the way you feel or think about the topic. Since everyone is different and has had different experiences, there are no right or wrong answers.

p. 5. Maslow's 4 stages of learning. Answers will vary based on your experience.

p. 7. 1. The fireman's talk was far too advanced for the children. He didn't fit his talk to his audience.

2. The teacher asked for a fireman who was familiar with younger children. She also suggested the kinds of things that the children were interested in seeing and doing while they were at the fire station.

3. The fireman fit his talk to the 4 year olds and they got to do the kinds of things they were interested in doing.

4. Make sure that you know as much about your audience as possible. Their age, their background on the subject, and their expectations are important.

p. 9 1. Answers will vary. A person who is bored or not interested in listening may not make eye contact with the speaker. The bored listener may be looking around the room or at something not related to the speaker, like reading the newspaper. The bored listener may be slumped in a chair and be tapping his fingers or toes. The bored listener may yawn or stretch as though s/he is alone in the room.

2. Answers will vary. Each of us has the ability to influence how we are perceived by others by changing our behavior and the situation. One might stand up straight or sit up straight when

talking with others instead of sitting in a chair with one's feet up. Direct eye contact is better than reading a magazine.

3. Answers will vary based on experiences.

4. Answers will vary. You can be too loud in a theater, in church, etc.

   You can be too soft when people can't hear you, when the microphone doesn't work, around heavy machinery, etc.

p. **24** 1. Answers will vary based on experience.

2. Answers will vary. Saying something like, "Sounds like you're having a bad day. I'll be back another time." Take a deep breath and count to 10 before you respond.

p. 26 Answers will vary. Tax information might be read in small paragraphs that refer to specific lines of the form. Notes and memos at work might be read quickly or carefully depending on the subject, the amount of detail and the importance. Assembly directions would be read at different times during the assembly process and in different ways depending on the experience of the reader. The directions on a cake mix would be read differently based on the cooks experience. the same is true for the financial section of the newspaper. A telephone book would seldom if ever be read from beginning to end, but to find specific information. A love letter might be saved and read over and over again.

p. 27-28. Answers will vary.

1. Newspaper--organized in sections for different topics with an index on the front page. Features are listed in the index by section and page number.

2. TV Guide -- organized by Day and Time. Special features include a crossword puzzle, question/answer column, feature article to highlight a particular program.

3. Parts Catalog -- has an index of part numbers. May be organized into categories of parts. Many different styles based on parts.

4. Telephone book -- has a table of Contents and an Index to assist in finding other information. Names of people and businesses are in alphabetical order; some times by geographical area.

5. The purpose of the index is to provide the reader with an alphabetical list of the subjects in the written materials.

6. The purpose of the table of contents shows the reader how the reading material is structured and ordered by providing an ordered list of topics or chapters and their page numbers.

7. Lists of information are likely to be organized in alphabetical order. Movies are alphabetized in the TV book. Shows are alphabetized in the newspaper.

p. 29 Answers will vary.

p. 30 Answers will vary.

p. 32. Answers will vary. The point of this lesson is that writing is a skill that changes according to the needs of the task. Certainly we would not write a letter to the president of a company on a dirty piece of scrap paper, but that might work OK for a grocery list or a telephone message at home.

p. 34 Answers will vary.

p. 35 Answers will vary.

p. 36 Answers will vary.

p. 37 Answers will vary.

p. 39. No Answers will vary. Why? The note was not written for the audience.

p. 40 You might wonder who the note was written TO and who the note was FROM. Depending on your shift, you might wonder if it was 2AM or 2PM. You might wonder where you should be. 2. All the basics are missing--WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW. 3. Answers will vary. 4. Answers will vary.

p. 44 Answers will vary.

p. 45 Answers will vary.

p. 46 Answers will vary.

p. 48 Answers will vary.

p. 49 Answers will vary.

p. 50 Answers will vary.

p. 51 Answers will vary.

p. 52 Answers will vary.

p. 53 Answers will vary